THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI BHAJAN LAL): (a) Yes, Sir. State Government of Punjab have reported that 50,000 hectares of land in the State has been rendered uncultivable due to deposition of sand/silton account of recent floods.

(b) Expenditure ceiling of Rs. 8.00 crores has been approved for removal of sandcast/eroded lands for the State of Punjab by the Central Government for providing subsidy to eligible categories of farmers whose lands have been affected by sandcasting. National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has also issued instructions for providing institutional financing for restoration of sandcast lands in Punjab. State Government of Punjab have also geared up the administrative machinery to expedite restoration of the sandcast lands.

Board of Directors of the Modern Food Industries

*307. DR. RATNAKAR PANDEY:
SHRI CHANDRIKA PRASAD TRIPATHI:

Will the Minister of FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Modern Food Industries is functioning without Board of Directors; and

(b) if so, since when and the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOOD PROCESSING IN DUSTRIES (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER): (a) and (b) Modern Food Industries (India) Ltd. is functioning with a Board of Directors as prescribed in the Articles of Association of the Company.

Damage to houses due to floods

*309. SHRIMATI SUDHA VIJAY JOSHI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the recent floods in several States have caused house collapses and damage to houses on a considerable scale and have upset Government's housing schemes;

(b) if so, the estimated losses as a result thereof; and

(c) the steps Government propose to take to provide relief to those who have lost their shelters in the floods and also to push through other housing schemes?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI BHAJAN LAL): (a) and (b) A total number of 25.45 lakh houses have been damaged on account of the heavy rains/floods in the country during the south-west monsoon 1988 as reported by the affected States.

(c) Ceilings of expenditure of Rs. 33.27 crores have been approved in respect of States *viz.*, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Gujarat, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala, Sikkim, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Karnataka and Tripura, so far for providing relief to persons whose houses have been damaged for repair/reconstruction. The memoranda submitted by the States of Arunachal Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan are being processed as per established procedure.

Loan assistance to the flood affected families for repair/reconstruction of their damaged houses is also being extended by the Housing and Urban Development Corporation, the Nationalised Banks and other housing finance institutions in the affected States.

Conference of State Labour Ministers

*310. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI:
SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA:

Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Conference of State Labour Ministers and the National Commission on Rural Labour was held at New Delhi recently; if so, what were the main subjects discussed and the decisions arrived at;

(b) whether any legislation has been suggested to regulate the minimum wage for the rural workers; and

(c) if so, what were the recommendations of the Conference on this issue and by when legislation in this regard is likely to be introduced?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI BINDESHWARI DUBEY): (a) The 37th session of the Labour Ministers' Conference to which members of the National Commission on Rural Labour were also invited, was held on 7th November, 1988. The main subjects discussed and the conclusions arrived at are indicated in the statement. (*See* below)

(b) No new legislation was recommended by the Conference.

(c) Does not arise.

AGENDA:

1. Agricultural Labour—disabilities they suffer from.

2. Issues concerning the administration of medical care under ESI Scheme.

3. Labour Laws vital to unorganised sector which include:—

(a) Amendments proposed in the Minimum Wages Act, 1948.

(b) Functioning of the Minimum Wages Act.

(c) Bonded Labour.

(d) Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986.

(e) Equal Renumeration Act, 1976.

4. Suggestions to empower the Central Government to make rules under the Factories Act in addition to the State Governments/Union Territories.

CONCLUSIONS INDICATING FURTHER FOLLOW UP ACTION REQUIRED:

ITEM 1:

The State Labour Ministers discussed various features of the economic conditions that agricultural labourer faced in the country. The report made by the Sub Committee of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee of the Ministry of Labour in this respect was discussed. Some States were in favour of such a Central Legislation, but the general view was that the problem was not one of lack of Central Legislation, but more of implementation of the legislation already on the Statute Book e.g., the Minimum Wages Act, the Equal Renumeration Act, and other laws enacted which cover agricultural labour within their ambit. The general view was that if implementation could be strengthened, this would in effect, achieve what might be contemplated for any Central legislation. The basic economic problem underlying was that employment was not available for the whole year to agricultural labour, and this has to be remedied by increasing the total quantum of available employment. If certain national guidelines could be laid down in consultation with the States and measures undertaken to increase the impact and coverage of employment oriented schemes like RLEGP, NREP, particularly, during off-season periods of fall-in-employment, these would be more practical steps to tackle the problem of economically disadvantage agricultural labour. The number of labour inspectors also needed to be stepped up, with Central assistance where necessary.

The Conference considered a suggestion for revising the minimum wages for agricultural labour from the level of Rs. 11/- per day accepted in the May, 1987 Conference of Labour Ministers, to a higher level in May 1989, when the two year period recommended by the 31st Conference, 1980, would run out. Also a further suggestion that the level of minimum revised wages to be notified in May, 1989 should be protected against inflation by some mechanisms linking it to the raise in the Consumer Price Index for agricultural labour was considered. The Conference came to the conclusion that both these suggestions required further consideration. The reactions of the State Government would be given to the Central Government at an early date.

ITEM 2:

The position regarding the poor state of medical services provided in various States on behalf of ESI Scheme was explained. It was claimed that the Scheme was being run by the contributions made by the workers and employers to the ESIC which is a statutory body but the ESIC was unable to exercise any control over the quality of medical services. Since ESIC was accountable to the tripartite body of the Corporation and the Parliament and the funds were provided to the extent of 7/8 of the expenditure, it was proposed by the workers' representatives and employers' representatives that the medical services should be taken over by the ESIC. The Chairman suggested that the management of the ESI medical services in the States may be entrusted to a Joint Management Committee comprising State Labour/Health Secretary, Director, State ESI Medical Services and the representatives of the Corporation for taking decisions speedily and the share of the State Government and the Corporation may be placed in a separate fund which should be subject to the control of this Committee.

After a detailed discussion some of the States welcomed the suggestion and thought it could be workable. Some States wanted the legal aspects of such a Committee to be examined and expressed reservations regarding the practicability of such a Committee functioning effectively. Some of the States opposed. Finally it was decided that the State Governments should give it further thought and special meetings at both Regional and Central level will be called to discuss it further in which the representatives of employers and trade unions will also be invited.

ITEM 3:

The amendments to the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, in the Agenda notes were supported by the State Labour Ministers. It was generally agreed that the amendments should be enacted at an early date.

It was felt that if additional inspectors were appointed, mobility of inspectors improved, publicity stepped up, awareness raised through organising camps and group meetings for educating agricultural labour and making inspection the responsibility of only one agency at State level, would all go a long way towards making implementation of these Acts effective. All these aspects of better implementation would be put on a regular schedule of monitoring.

The Conference suggested for strengthening of Central assistance.

ITEM 4:

The Conference noted the need for uniform rules on important aspects of occupational safety and health and agreed that the Central Government should also have the power to make rules under the Factories Act. The Central Government should, however, circulate the draft rules among the State Governments and finalise the Rules after consultation with them. The Conference also felt that provisions should be made to avoid conflict between the Central and the State Rules. Moreover, the State Governments should have the power to supplement the Central Rules.

Drinking water scarcity in Orissa

*311. SHRI BAIKUNTHA NATH SAHU:

Will the Minister of URBAN DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have identified the towns in Orissa facing acute drinking water scarcity during summer;

(b) if so, the names of those towns; and

(c) the scheme drawn up or proposed to be implemented to remove water scarcity problem in Koonjhargarh?

THE MINISTER OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI MOHSINA KIDWAI): (a) to (c). Water Supply is a State subject. Urban Water Supply Schemes are planned and implemented by the State Governments and executed as their normal plan activity.

Accordingly, it is for the State Government to identify the towns and execute specific schemes.